



The Packer Collegiate Institute
2018- 2019 Middle School Curriculum Guide

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Middle School Curriculum Guide 2018-19

Packer's Middle School offers a rich, challenging academic program grounded in meaningful content and structured around the development of critical skills. We aim to create engaged, reflective students who are able to work hard, make connections and find joy and value in their learning. Our goal is to foster students' creativity and curiosity and to help them develop responsibility, self-awareness, empathy, independence, the capacity to work collaboratively, think critically and develop their own voice.

In the fifth and sixth grade, our academic program is anchored by classes in math and science and a combined English and history core class, which meets at the beginning or end of each day. Twice weekly, all fifth grade students take Language and Literacy or receive small-group literacy or math support. These courses are taught by members of the English and Learning Support Departments, respectively. This approach provides students with differentiated enrichment and support in critical skills. The fifth grade academic program also includes year-long classes in instrumental or choral music and physical education as well as a rotation among our four arts classes (visual arts, digital video, theater, and dance) and a semester each of computing and health, all of which meet two times a week. Our sixth grade program expands to include the study of a second language (Spanish, French, Latin or Chinese) or another year of skill consolidation and an introduction to Latin in our linguistics course.

In seventh and eighth grade, English and history become two separate classes. Students are able to deepen their language study, and can begin to specialize in two of our four arts choices. As students move through the Middle School, their academic program becomes increasingly sophisticated; they are introduced to more complex and abstract ideas, and take on more responsibility and independence inside and outside of the classroom.

Our academic program, which is detailed below, is enriched by a thoughtful, structured advising program, significant opportunities in athletics, arts and service, clubs and organizations that channel students' developing interests and leadership, and intentional programming designed to support students' social-emotional learning and growth.

English

The goal of the Middle School English curriculum is to encourage students' love of reading and writing, as well as to introduce and reinforce the skills students need in order to read critically and to express their thoughts effectively.

Students first encounter the "whole class read" in fifth grade, and this model of a shared reading experience is supported throughout Middle School. Texts selected for whole class reads are chosen carefully. Factors taken into account include: age appropriateness, literary merit, diversity of voice and experience, and student opinion. Students are taught to annotate, to identify salient passages, and to draw crucial connections, initially between ideas and, ultimately, between texts. As they move from the literal

to the abstract, students receive support in analyzing and discussing texts. All students are required to read independently, as well.

Students write frequently in many analytic and creative genres. Through the use of rubrics, templates, and exemplars, teachers articulate their expectations and support students as they develop their voices as writers. Revision is taught as an integral part of the writing process. Vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar lessons support student writing.

Class activities encourage students to become confident speakers and active listeners. Oral presentations and group work are integral components of all courses.

Students have frequent experiences with project-based learning, interdisciplinary work, and the expanded classroom that is New York City. Teachers capitalize on opportunities to move beyond Packer's walls.

Grade Five English/History Core

In fifth grade, English and history are taught together as an interdisciplinary core class. The history curriculum begins with prehistory and geography and continues on to Egypt, Greece and Rome. A number of the books read for English are connected to the history curriculum, including pertinent historical fiction and the Greek myths. Other age-appropriate novels, works of poetry, and short stories supplement the curriculum. The work of the Core classes in English/History 5 is project-based. That is, the knowledge acquired cumulatively throughout a study is represented in a culminating project devised and executed by an individual or a small group depending on the unit. These experiences challenge students to be creative and to practice critical thinking, communication, group work, and problem solving. Additionally, the project-based approach provides many opportunities for differentiation and self-assessment.

The goal of the fifth-grade English curriculum is to encourage children to think deeply about literature, to discuss their ideas, and to write clearly about what they have read in terms of both content and their personal responses to it. In two instances in the fall, the entire fifth grade reads one book, but as the year progresses children make their own selections and run their own book clubs. These clubs are structured discussion groups in which 3-5 students read the same novel. Students, following a system of protocols, set reading goals, assign appropriate homework, create good discussion questions, and work together to devise and create a culminating project. In other English work, individuals present book talks on a rotating basis throughout the year.

Expository writing in English includes essay writing emphasizing organization based on a hierarchy of information; summary writing that reflects what is most important in a story; responses to literature exploring character and theme development; and the ability to substantiate one's point of view with textual "evidence." Creative writing emphasizes personal memoir, poetry, and fiction. Revision is a major part of both expository and creative writing. The vocabulary program is drawn from the history curriculum and from literature selections. The spelling program is integrated into the writing curriculum and emphasizes basic spelling rules and frequently misspelled words. Grammar work focuses on parts of speech, punctuation, complete sentences, and paragraphing as a grammatical and stylistic tool.

The fifth-grade history curriculum asks students to consider how and why civilizations developed, the ways in which they are similar or different, the extent to which patterns of conquest and subjugation are cyclical, and the role of the victor (i.e., men of wealth and position) in determining what is recorded for posterity. Students study geography with an emphasis on the determinative role it plays in the development of civilizations. Throughout the year, they work on note-taking skills to learn how to separate main ideas from supporting detail, organize notes by categories, and summarize what has been read. In addition, they learn how to construct and develop short essays. For their research project on ancient Egypt, students choose a topic, identify sources of information, take notes, organize, write and revise a report, and compile a bibliography. The writing and presentation of ancient Greek-style plays is a culminating project of the Greek unit. In the spring, during the study of Ancient Rome, students conduct a mock trial of Julius Caesar's assassins.

Other areas of emphasis in the Core program are oral presentation skills, study and organization skills, test-taking skills, and use of the laptop to enhance learning. Throughout the course, the skills of critical reading and analytical writing are practiced at an age-appropriate level, establishing a foundation for the ongoing literacy work that is a hallmark of the intellectual development and academic achievement that define the Packer experience.

Whole-class (shared) texts include *The Watsons Go to Birmingham: 1963*, a work of historical fiction by Christopher Paul Curtis; *The Phantom Tollbooth*, the adventure novel/modern fairy tale by Norton Juster; *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of Greek Myths*, an anthology of Greek myths retold by Bernard Evslin; *The Secrets of Vesuvius*, a nonfiction account of an archaeologist's work at Mt. Vesuvius presented alongside a fictionalized story based on that same archeological evidence by Sara Bisel; an array of novels read in small groups; and selected poetry and short stories.

Grade Five Language and Literacy

The fifth grade Language and Literacy class is a language enrichment experience; it is an opportunity for additional reading and writing practice, beyond what is already happening in Core. The class meets three times per cycle, and homework is assigned occasionally. In class, students are required to work both independently and collaboratively. They develop written expression skills through project based learning experiences, as well as by engaging in a traditional writing process.

Students will read short stories and memoirs as a whole class and full novels in a small group book club setting. Using these reading experiences as starting points, they will practice writing both expository and narrative pieces, regularly referring back to the exemplar texts to learn about genre and applicable structures and literary devices. Expository writing focuses on: outlining and crafting a structured paragraph; creating opening and closing sentences; supporting ideas with facts and information; and transitioning between ideas and paragraphs. Narrative writing focuses on: planning and outlining for structure and flow; creating transitions between events and ideas; using descriptive, figurative, and sensory language; and writing for an audience. Students will practice and refine their grammar and vocabulary in the context of the writing assignments. With all writing projects, students will serve as peer editors, thereby both giving and receiving appropriate critical feedback.

Grade Six English/History Core

In Sixth Grade English, students are encouraged to enjoy reading by choosing books that capture their imaginations and provide a variety of reading experiences. Students learn to analyze literature through class discussions, writing, artwork, and conversations with smaller groups. Students write frequently and in a variety of ways about what they have read, including comprehension and inference questions, longer essays, and free responses. They also use course literature as a model for their own creative fiction and poetry writing. The course supports students' writing skills through the use of planning strategies, grammar and punctuation instruction, and the development of clear and precise expression.

In Sixth Grade History, students study the three interrelated cultures of the Islamic world, Europe, and China during the time period between 500 and 1500 C.E. A year-long research project, in which students choose an occupation or role to research for each of the three cultures we study, culminates in a simulation of cities along the Silk Road. Examination of the physical and cultural geography of each region studied is a significant component of the course; each unit incorporates increasingly sophisticated map skills. We also emphasize how each culture is reflected through its art. Several field trips to New York City museums and institutions supplement this aspect of the course. Current events presentations and discussions also complement our work.

Important skills emphasized in Sixth Grade Core include:

- Time management—managing long-term assignments with interim due dates, effective use of study guides, etc.
- Note-taking—writing information using students' own words, using a variety of note-taking and organizational formats, moving from whole class note-taking towards independence, etc.
- Annotation—focusing on comprehension and analysis
- Oral presentation—speaking clearly and confidently, making eye contact, etc.
- Vocabulary— understanding words in context; enjoying new words, and incorporating them into students' own vocabularies
- Expository writing—learning to write a thesis statement and support it in essay format
- Self-editing and revision of writing, incorporating feedback from teacher and peers
- Group work—cooperating with classmates to conduct discussions, create projects, etc.
- Technology—becoming familiar with online encyclopedias, reliable websites, introduction of new applications, etc.
- Transfer of skills between disciplines—English and History activities emphasize interdisciplinary connections to health, math, science, art, music, language, computing and design

Grade Seven English

Seventh grade students are introduced to adult literature, with a focus on developing critical reading skills through literary analysis. This analysis takes place both in and outside of the classroom, with a strong emphasis on close reading and annotation skills. Students are taught to examine the language, narrative, syntax, and context of a text while annotating for the following literary elements as they encounter both classic and contemporary works: theme, symbolism, foreshadowing, figurative language, sensory details, and characterization. Students are also encouraged to make inferences, predictions, and connections both within and across texts. They are taught to utilize these annotations as evidence to substantiate claims during both in-class discussions and written responses. In addition to classic and contemporary works, William Shakespeare is introduced for the first time as a whole class text in the seventh grade. The study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* allows for explicit teaching of skills such as: making effective use of textual features (glossary, summary, captioned photographs); paraphrasing; utilizing punctuation as a guide for interpreting tone and intonation (periods, semicolons, question marks, exclamation points, dashes); and comprehension and interpretation of a text through performance. An independent reading program encourages a further exploration of adult literature, as students are required to read four outside books during the school year.

Written expression, both expository and imaginative, is developed through experience with a variety of genres inspired by the whole-class texts: journal entries, paragraphs, essays, poetry, short stories, and shorter narratives. Students use various tools for publication, which may include: Google Docs, slide shows, oral reports, and multimedia presentations. Expository writing focuses on perfecting a paragraph: crafting and developing topic sentences; choosing, categorizing, and analyzing quotations to support an argument; contextualizing quotations; transitioning between ideas; and utilizing a variety of sentence structures and lengths. Creative writing focuses on the genre of realistic fiction, and students are taught how to craft a narrative lead, utilize sensory detail, create conflict, establish setting, and use dialogue effectively. The use of short stories serves as an effective tool for exploration of a variety of styles and creative writing techniques. In addition to these skills, students focus on voice, writing conventions, organization, and word choice. In order to enhance their ability in this regard, seventh graders study vocabulary using Membean, an online vocabulary program. Grammar is taught through sentence diagramming.

Texts include: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie; *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry; *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros; *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, by William Shakespeare; *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck; *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding; and selected short stories.

Grade Eight English

The foundational work of seventh grade English serves as a springboard for our curriculum in eighth grade. We set out to develop strong and passionate readers, writers, and thinkers who take pleasure in grappling with texts, sharing and arguing ideas and interpretations, and articulating their thinking in writing that is both cohesive and eloquent. Students read more sophisticated literature that emphasizes

themes such as coming of age, the relationship between parent and child, and the nature of love. Texts are examined and annotated with an eye toward theme, motif, style, and symbolism. This work is then utilized in the development of the essay form. Students spend one marking period honing their imaginative writing skills in a traditional writers' workshop, learning to both give and receive critical feedback. Revision is an integral component of both creative and analytic writing, and continued work in vocabulary and grammar bolsters this process.

Students read four outside books during the year, both independently and in small groups.

The interdisciplinary components of the course surface most during our reading of *Maus*, where both history and art are integrated into the curriculum.

Texts include: *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger; *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee; *Maus I & II* by Art Spiegelman; and selected short stories.

History

Packer's Middle School History Department encourages students to enjoy the study of history and to grasp its relevance to the present. We want our students to participate actively in the study of History – to ask questions, challenge assumptions, examine multiple perspectives, analyze sources, make connections between what they already know and what they are learning, make judgments, and express opinions. In the process, we use a range of pedagogical strategies such as simulations, debate, and project based learning to excite students about the study of history and engage them in multiple modes of learning.

The History Department develops these skills and habits of mind, which undergird further study of the discipline and inform participation in local, national and global communities:

- To analyze primary and secondary sources
- To write persuasively using specific supporting evidence
- To present clear and logical ideas orally
- To research effectively
- To develop study skills such as time management, note taking, and awareness of different learning styles
- To learn and appreciate how geography shapes human interaction and influences history
- To work independently and collaborate with others
- To understand current events and their relationship to history
- To connect personal experiences with a deeper understanding of the range of human experience

- To understand and appreciate experiences that differ from personal experiences and values

In the Fifth and Sixth Grades, each English and History course is taught together by one teacher as a Core class. In the Seventh and Eighth Grades, the two disciplines make appropriate interdisciplinary connections. Project-based work and excursions into the city are integral to the program.

Grade Five/Six History

See under Grade Five/Six English/History Core

Grade Seven History: American History

Seventh Grade History introduces students to the idea that historical narratives should be questioned and interpreted. It focuses on practices that develop inquiry, deliberation, analysis, and empathy. We emphasize that while historical events may have happened long ago, their effects shape the present in ways that can be global and personal. This course, the first in a two year sequence of U.S. history, covers the periods from English colonization through the mid-19th century. Essential questions include: how does geography shape culture? What are the relationships between land, money, and power in the American context? How do people from various religious, ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds work to build community or come into conflict? What tensions exist between the need to be both an individual in society and a member of a community? What are the foundational principles of American government and how does our government operate? In what ways does technology act as a force for social, economic, and cultural change? Are individuals the masters of their own destiny or bound by forces outside of their control? What is an American?

Students explore these questions through primary and secondary source analysis, discussion, debate, role-play, simulation, expository writing, interdisciplinary projects, and creative expression.

Texts include: *A History of Us*, by Joy Hakim (Oxford Press); *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, by Frederick Douglass; *The Absolutely True Diary of A Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie; *A Young People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn

Grade Eight History: Twentieth Century U.S. History In The Global Context

Throughout the twentieth century, the United States experienced a series of profound changes that impacted society at home and abroad. This course will focus on the key ideas, issues, people, and events that helped to transform the country and the world during this time. Students will identify relevant themes that will help them to make connections between the past and the changing world in which they currently live. We will examine industrialization and imperialism as historical events, and then analyze and

evaluate their continuing impact on our environment and our place in the global order. We will study Progressivism and the New Deal and ask questions about the role government should play in the lives of ordinary citizens. Through our studies of labor unions and The Harlem Renaissance, we will look at how collective action and artistry can effect change. The various wars of the twentieth century will provide the foundation for looking at how we define “the other,” procure resources, and deal with power. The wars will also be an opportunity for students to learn to identify propaganda and why it is effective. We will engage in discussions and continue to develop listening, note-taking, and historical thinking skills. Additionally, we will learn to analyze and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources to more fully understand the past and the historical process. We will continue to practice analytical writing skills and will on a variety of projects that will involve collaboration, role play, debate, research, and oral presentations.

Texts: *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* (Mc Dougall & Littel); *Animal Farm* by George Orwell; *American-Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang; *A Young People’s History of the United States* by Howard Zinn

Mathematics

The Middle School Mathematics curriculum is structured to gradually develop students’ knowledge of basic math operations and algebra and to enhance their critical thinking skills. The Middle School Mathematics Department has developed a sequence of courses that both build on students’ knowledge from Lower School and expand this foundation in preparation for more complex math studies in future courses. In addition, our curriculum promotes student inquiry, critical thinking, and problem solving by exploring mathematics in a multitude of ways. Students have several opportunities through their Middle School years to discover concepts independently, while solidifying their understanding by applying problem-solving techniques to real-world situations and sharing their understanding with their peers.

Grade Five Mathematics

Fifth grade mathematics is a discovery-oriented course that builds on concepts and skills learned in fourth grade. Students develop computational fluency with operations on whole numbers and further solidify their understanding of operations with fractions and decimals. They study ratios and percents, exponential notation, elementary number theory (primes, composite numbers, factors, and multiples), plane and coordinate geometry, measurement, probability and statistics, and introductory algebra. Students practice computation, estimation, and problem solving, and they apply these skills through a variety of explorations and projects.

Text: *Bridges Mathematics Grade 5*

Grade Six Mathematics

Students in sixth grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units are comprised of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their

understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Sixth grade students master operations of whole numbers, decimals and fractions; the year also includes extensive work with number theory, rates and ratios, percents, plane geometry, and introductory algebra.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 6*

Beginning in the 7th grade, students are grouped into different course levels, standard or advanced, based on their previous achievement in 5th and 6th grade.

Grade Seven Mathematics

Students in seventh grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units are comprised of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Seventh grade students master integer operations and deepen their understanding of ratios, percents and proportions. They also explore linear relationships by considering their associated equations, graphs, and story problems; complete units on plane and 3-D geometry, and learn about experimental and theoretical probability.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 7*

Grade Eight Mathematics: Algebra I

Students in eighth grade learn math through an inquiry-based approach. Units are comprised of investigations that offer students the opportunity to explore problems in groups and then solidify their understanding afterwards through teacher-guided class discussions. Students do extensive work with the Pythagorean theorem and radicals, and they deepen their understanding of linear relationships. They are also introduced to exponential and quadratic functions, studying the equations, graphs, and contexts associated with those relationships. They close the year with a unit on solving linear systems of equations.

Text: *Connected Mathematics 3, Grade 8*

Science

The Middle School science program emphasizes the “big ideas” in science. Within each grade, concepts involving earth, physical, and life sciences are organized around major themes encouraging students to make connections among the sciences. Critical thinking research skills are sequentially developed as students conduct inquiry investigations throughout each year. The acquisition of these skills is applied in eighth grade when students are required to complete a year-long independent research project. Students present their findings in the spring at their annual Science Fair.

Grade Five Science

The Fifth Grade curriculum is divided into four segments: “What Do We Need in Order to Survive” on (1) Planet Earth, (2) the International Space Station, (3) the Moon, and (4) Mars. The identification of

these needs includes analyzing evidence from past geologic eras, considering current environmental effects on the ecology of living things, and predicting future needs based on present-day conditions. Topics include matter and energy flow in plants and animals; fossils and the position of the continents; human evolution; properties of matter; physical and chemical changes in matter; interactions among the Sun, Earth, and Moon; and celestial bodies within the boundaries of constellations. Research skills throughout the year focus on experimentation; the creation of models; and the measurement, interpretation, and communication of collected data. The culminating event of the year occurs in the fourth quarter, during which students apply what they have learned to create a model of a colony on Mars to sustain 300 people.

Text: *Science* (Harcourt)

Grade Six Science

The focus of sixth grade science is on “Fundamental Physics” concepts. These concepts include relative motion, forces as interactions, work and power, and energy. The curriculum consists of logically connected modules that allow students to build their conceptual understanding of physics concepts, develop relevant mathematical reasoning, and simultaneously learn how to think like scientists. At the end of the year, students are challenged to design and engineer a machine that accomplishes a simple task.

Grade Seven Science

Seventh grade science explores the life sciences, with an emphasis on understanding how living organisms operate at both a macroscopic and microscopic level. Additionally, an environmental study of freshwater sustainability will provide students an understanding of both water as a vital raw material for all living creatures and a global perspective of humans' access to potable water. In this primarily biology-based course, students will explore the unity and diversity of organisms through a study of the characteristics and classification of living organisms. Life at the cellular level is investigated with an integrated look at cellular structures and the processes carried out by each structure. Students will learn about reproduction and genetics, and how these concepts lead to the natural selection and evolution of species. A final unit on the mammalian nervous system provides students with an expanded look at the system and larger structures that allow animals to interact with the world around them. Students will participate in a culminating student-driven project for the Middle School Science Fair, which will allow them to apply their science skills and knowledge to investigate an approved topic of their choice. Science skills emphasized throughout the year include detailed observation, collection and display of quantitative and qualitative data, drawing conclusions based on evidence and data, and communicating findings through a variety of mediums.

Text: *Glencoe Life Science* (Glencoe/McGraw Hill)

Grade Eight Science

In eighth grade science, students delve into the worlds of chemistry and physics. Students are introduced to the concept of matter, and we look to see how we describe, analyze and observe matter using the

principles of chemistry and physics. Students learn about the fundamental properties of matter, and what this means when this matter comes into contact with other matter. Experiments are integral within the year and not only will the students be coming into contact with a wide range of chemicals and scientific equipment, but they will be learning how to design an experiment in order to attain accurate and reliable data. In line with the practical aspect of the year, students will be also working on several STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) projects that involve them actually making and testing various products. The year culminates with Science Fair where the students get to bring all their practical and theoretical knowledge into practice and develop their understanding of a topic they are particularly interested in.

Texts: *Chemical Interactions* (McDougal Littell Science) and *Matter and Energy* (McDougal Littell Science)

World Language

The World Language Program is committed to a curriculum through which students develop the four major language skills necessary for communication: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Each level is a progression aimed at building upon the skills that were taught in the previous year. The World Language Department also believes that the study of people and culture is critical to the appreciation of a language; therefore, appropriate historical and cultural material is integrated at each level of the program in each of our four languages: Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese and Latin.

Grade 5 World Language: Explorations in Latin and Mandarin Chinese

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Year 1 Spanish: Introduction to Spanish

Spanish 50 is designed to build a foundation in the Spanish language and to introduce students to Spanish-speaking cultures. From the start, students will develop listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills in Spanish. All four skills are equally important in this course. Students will focus on simple sentence structures and verbs in the indicative mood (primarily focusing on the present tense).

Throughout this year students will explore issues of diversity through exploration of region-specific vocabulary, grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and cultural facts related to various

Spanish-speaking countries and cultures. Students will do this through written exercises, oral presentations, and through the incorporation of technology. Students will spend fewer than four hours a week together in class; therefore, in-class participation is very important. The greater the participation, the more exciting and enjoyable the class will be!

Text: *Exprésate 1A, Holt, Rinehart, Winston*

Year 2 Spanish: Fundamentals in Spanish

In Spanish 100 students acquire a solid basic vocabulary and begin to employ the four skills necessary for mastery of the language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In addition, they will continue to consolidate the skills learned in Spanish 50. Students expand their knowledge of basic grammar and further develop their proficiency in all areas of the language. This course aims to build student confidence and the ability to express themselves in the target language. Students will demonstrate their language proficiency through comprehensive presentations, cooperative projects, and written and oral activities. Upon completing the course, students will be able to use successfully the present, immediate future, and preterit tenses. Extensive use of authentic materials and technology will enhance student learning.

Text: *Exprésate 1B, Holt, Rinehart, Winston*

Year 3 Spanish: Foundations in Spanish

This intermediate Middle School course begins by reviewing and consolidating many of the grammatical and thematic topics studied in Spanish 50 and 100. Students then delve into new grammar topics, which include a thorough study of pronouns, the preterite and the imperfect tenses, commands and the future tense. Extensive use of authentic materials and technology will enhance student learning. As a closing event to their language experience in the Middle School, students at the 200 level travel together over Spring Break to Puerto Rico for a multi-day language and cultural immersion trip that includes opportunities for service and authentic engagement with local artists, merchants and fishermen.

Text: *Exprésate 2, Holt, Rinehart, Winston*

French

Year 1 French: Introduction to French

This Middle school course is designed to build a foundation in the French language and to introduce students to various aspects of French and Francophone culture, including cuisine, holidays, customs, art and music. Through a wide range of activities and the use of technology in the classroom, students will develop listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills in French. All four skills are equally important in this course, and students will focus on simple sentence structures in the present tense using regular and irregular verbs. Throughout the year, students will learn a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to describe weather, physical characteristics and personality traits, hobbies,

transportation, the home, health and the human body, and food and drink. Students will also learn idiomatic expressions and cultural facts related to various Francophone countries.

Year 2 French: Fundamentals in French

This Middle School course is a continuation of the basic skills and concepts introduced in French 50. Through a wide range of activities and the use of technology in the classroom, students will further develop their proficiency in listening, speaking, writing, and reading in French. Throughout the year, students in French 100 will learn a wide range of vocabulary elaborating on the themes introduced in French 50, as well as explore more complex grammatical structures, internalize irregular verb forms, and master the present tense.

Year 3 French: Foundations in French

This intermediate Middle School course reviews and consolidates the grammatical topics and vocabulary studied in French 50 and French 100. Students are then introduced to new grammatical concepts which become more essential as written and oral communication grow more sophisticated. Mastery of the past tenses and proficiency with pronouns of all types are the main goals of this course. Students read several short stories and poems in French and explore the worlds of France and French-speaking countries through readings, music, films and projects.

Latin

Year 1 Latin: Introduction to Latin

In the introductory Latin class, students work toward the ultimate goal of reading and comprehending Latin in a meaningful context. In pursuing this goal, students will also acquire historical and cultural knowledge about antiquity. In addition, students will gain an enriched understanding of English vocabulary and grammar. The class will focus on acquiring Latin vocabulary, making connections with English derivatives, and memorizing basic Latin grammatical forms and functions. Students gain an understanding of how the structures of Latin words and sentences impart meaning in a way that's different from English. Students will then learn how to apply this knowledge to understanding stories written in Latin, that increase in sophistication as the year progresses.

Texts: *Ecce Romani I and Language Activity Book IA*, by Lawall, et al.

Year 2 Latin: Fundamentals in Latin

This Middle School course is a continuation of the skills introduced and mastered in Latin 50. During the year students will further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language. Analogies to English grammar will be plentiful. Students will continue to develop and sharpen their ability to read Latin with comprehension, to translate with accuracy (both from and into Latin), and to analyze grammatically the structural components of a Latin sentence as presented within the context of

continuous passages of Latin. For the purpose of enriching the students' English vocabulary, emphasis will continue to be placed upon the roots and derivations of the Latin vocabulary encountered. Emphasis will likewise be placed upon the rich historical and cultural aspects of antiquity so that students may gain an understanding of and appreciation for the impact of the ancient world upon our own heritage.

Texts: *Ecce Romani I and Language Activity Book IB*, by Lawall, et al.

Year 3 Latin: Foundations in Latin

This Middle School course is a continuation of all of the basic skills introduced and mastered in the previous year. During the course of the year students further their exploration of the grammatical forms and functions of the Latin language, sharpening their skills at reading, and translation with an informed grammatical analysis of the language. New vocabulary, grammar and syntax are studied within the meaningful context of continuous passages of Latin prose. For the purpose of enriching the students' English vocabulary, emphasis will continue to be placed upon the roots and derivations of the Latin vocabulary for each successive chapter. A focus upon the culture and history of Rome reinforces the link between their civilization and our own.

Texts: *Ecce Romani II and Language Activity Book IIA*, by Lawall, et al.

Mandarin Chinese

Year 1 Chinese: Introduction to Chinese

This is a yearlong course in the introductory level of Mandarin Chinese language. This course is intended primarily for students with no previous knowledge of Chinese. While the course is designed for students to develop all four skills in the language, more emphasis is placed on pronunciation with accurate intonation. The overall goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in Mandarin Chinese language and to prepare them for the next level of study. At the end of Chinese 50, students will be able to recognize 50 basic radicals, make a self-introduction (name, age, birthday, family members, etc), grasp the vocabulary of countries and continents, learn and celebrate Chinese festivals, and compare school systems in China and in the states.

Texts: *Chinese Made Easy, Book 1, 2nd edition, Simplified Characters, Joint Publish, Hong Kong; Textbook & Workbook.*

Year 2 Chinese: Fundamentals in Chinese

This is the second-year course in Mandarin Chinese language. This course is intended primarily for students who have completed Mandarin Chinese 50. The course continues to stress the development of all four skills in the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is designed to help students develop proficiency in verbal communication, reading comprehension and simple writing skills. The overall goal is to provide students with a solid foundation in the Chinese language and to prepare them for a higher

level of study. At the end of Chinese 100, students will be able to talk about hobbies, sports, weather, clothing, travels and their personal preferences. They will also learn adjectives for describing actions, clothing, weather and physical features.

Texts: *Chinese Made Easy, Book 2, 2nd edition, Simplified Characters, Joint Publish, Hong Kong; Textbook & Workbook.*

Year 3 Chinese: Foundations in Chinese

This course is intended for students who have completed Mandarin Chinese 50 and 100. This course aims to develop the student's intermediate language skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students will be able to recognize and reproduce at least one hundred and fifty Chinese characters. They will also be able to write short essays, dialogues, and simple descriptive/narrative texts cover everyday topics. Through a series of culture-based activities, students will not only learn about Chinese culture, but also develop a basic awareness of cultural commonality and diversity.

Texts: *Integrated Chinese (simplified edition): Level 1, Part 1, Cheng & Tsui Company, 3rd Edition*

Learning Support

Middle School Learning Specialists teach Learning Support classes, which are offered in the fifth and sixth grades for students who need to strengthen their fundamental language and math skills. The ultimate goal for students in these classes is for them to transfer these skills across content areas and apply them independently. In seventh and eighth grade, Learning Specialists meet with students individually or in small groups to support their learning needs. This support focuses on developing academic skills in specific content areas, coaching students with executive function skills such as time management and organization, and directly teaching learning strategies. Middle School Learning Specialists collaborate with teachers regularly, attend team meetings, and support our students by being present in many classes.

Grade 5: Learning Support

The fifth grade Learning Support classes is taken as an alternative to the Language and Literacy enrichment class. The focus of this class is on developing reading, writing, or mathematics skills. Courses include practice in decoding, encoding, reading comprehension, vocabulary, the writing process, and mathematical fluency among other key skills. Learning Support classes also support students' developing thinking skills, as well as metacognitive awareness to allow students to reflect on themselves as learners and begin to self-monitor their study habits. The class meets during a regularly scheduled band instead of the language and literacy course.

Grade 6: Learning Support

Language Support consolidates and expands the complexity of reading, writing, and study skills begun in 5th Grade. Aligned with sixth grade English/History Core, this course offers students an opportunity to expand and improve their English reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and Middle School study skills. The curriculum includes investigation into Latin roots of English words and Latin derivatives in particular, word-sentence-paragraph analysis, English grammar activities, and the non-fiction reading and note-taking skills that are needed for students to be successful in Science and History.

Grade 6: Math Support

Similar to the Language Support class, sixth grade Math Support consolidates and expands students' skills in key mathematical areas. Students build their fluency with number facts, explore mathematical concepts, and gain practice using efficient algorithms for problem solving. The Math Support curriculum is closely aligned with the sixth grade math program, providing time to reinforce and extend concepts covered as well as target additional areas where students need support.

Academic Technology

Technology is a powerful tool to support and enrich teaching and learning. We believe technology should be woven seamlessly into a student's education, enhancing curriculum across disciplines and grade levels, and furthering innovation, design, computational thinking, and digital fluency. These values are realized through our 1:1 computing program, our Google Classroom learning platform, and the prevalent use of technological tools and approaches across the curriculum in middle school. Our goal is for students to embrace technological tools and processes so they can become active digital creators and thoughtful, responsible users of technology.

In grade five students begin the Packer Laptop Program. Each student is provided a laptop to learn to use the device effectively and responsibly to leverage it for meaningful learning. Students conduct online research, create videos and music, produce written documents, manipulate and visualize data, and engage in programming and robotics. Students begin to bring home the computer at some point in the fifth grade year. They use the same device throughout their middle school career.

In Middle School students use the Google Classroom platform to manage classwork and assignments, collaborate with peers and interact digitally with their teachers. All middle school homework is posted in Google Classroom.

The Digital Citizenship program supports students to think critically, behave safely, and participate responsibly in our digital world. Digital citizenship activities take place in computing and design class, Health, Library, Advisory and other areas of the program.

Computing and Design

Students in grades five through eight are introduced to the important field of computer science and the design process through a required yearly semester-long course. The Middle School computing and design curriculum is designed to expose students to key concepts in the field including computational thinking, physical computing, and the design process. Through the development of engaging software and hardware projects students develop their creativity and critical thinking.

Grade Five Computing and Design

Students begin the course by receiving their laptop and explore how they will be using it throughout their time in Middle School. This includes skills from how to write an email to backing up data in Google Drive. They will then begin to learn about Digital Citizenship and what it means to be responsible online through resources from Common Sense Media. In their third unit, students examine the hardware components of their laptop, building upon their understanding of how these components work together. In the second half of the semester, students focus on their computational and design thinking skills through the Lego WeDo and Scratch platforms. By building and programming various projects, students will finish the semester learning concepts such as loops, variables, conditionals, modularity, and debugging.

Grades Six Computing and Design

This course begins with students reviewing computational concepts by creating an animation and games, in Scratch, that require students to think about how their use will use their program. After getting comfortable programming with their laptops again, students delve deeper into Digital Citizenship looking at cyberbullies/upstanders, communicating online, gender stereotypes, and plagiarism/copyright. For their third unit, students begin exploring 3D modeling through Tinkercad and create models of items, buildings, and landscapes from the Middle Ages researched in their English/History class. Students' next unit focuses on physical computing where they ultimately create a crosswalk through Hummingbird Robotics with LEDs, sensors, motors, and servos. The final project of the semester has students working in pairs to develop what phones will look like 10 years in the future using Tinkercad and Scratch. This final project is presented in each class and showcased to the entire grade so students can see the various different phones and user interfaces their peers created.

Grades Seven Computing and Design

In the seventh grade students work extensively in Khan Academy's text-based program, where the students learn how to use the Javascript language and the Processing.js library to create fun drawings and animation. Students learn the foundation topics of computer science starting with a lesson on shapes utilizing coordinate geometry. Then we move onto learning about variables, animation, creating interactive programs, functions, logic and if statements and looping. They end the semester with a logo project in conjunction with the 7th grade art curriculum in creating a logo of their initials that defines who they are; they create a 4 by 4 size paintings of their logos. From these inspirations, the students create a program that reflects their logos.

Grade Eight Computing and Design

In the eighth grade, students begin with a review of computer science concepts from 7th grade with a text based programming language. Then we delve in project based learning with physical computing. Using the Microbit, they put together different sensors and program them to come alive, utilizing the programming concepts reviewed from the beginning of the year. For example, programming a time on the LED display and triggering an alarm on a piezo buzzer at a certain time. Then, the soldering project helps them get comfortable with working with a soldering iron and solder; they soldered the lady bug solder bug to light up it's LED eyes by a photosensor that detects lights. As their final project, they built a programmable Microbit controlled car, where they had to build the car from scratch; soldering the wires onto the servos and constructing a 3 wheeled robot chassis platform.

Fine and Performing Arts

The Arts department offers artistic opportunities to inspire, develop and foster our student's creative voice. Middle School Arts is a joyful collaboration between teachers and students with opportunities for work that are playful and meaningful, and challenges that encourage risk-taking with an emphasis on exploring new ideas in an imaginative way. The arts scaffolds the curriculum by providing the practical tool necessary to help students create, explore, and experiment in any medium they may choose. The span between fifth and eighth grade are significant transitional years and through the arts we embrace those transitions as we address our students' increasing ability to see more clearly and think more deeply.

Using both traditional and innovative techniques, we encourage students to take creative risks, we support our students when they meet with setbacks, and we encourage the rigors of disciplined craft and development of both technical skills and artistic experience in all specialties.

In all of our arts (Dance, Digital Video, Theatre and Visual Arts) and music (both Choral and Instrumental) classes, we foster both the formal studio/class experience, and the co-curricular experience, in which students share their work in a supportive environment, both within and beyond Packer's walls.

Dance

Grade 5 Dance

In 5th Grade we highlight the connection between culture and dance. We explore the differences in music, rhythm, dress, patterns and techniques of ten different countries, dancing everything from the Yanko Ribbon Dance to the Troika to the Virginia Reel. Through celebrating the differences between movement styles and cultures, we hope to discover similarities that help us all to connect.

Grade 6 Dance

At the 6th grade level, dance class gives students the opportunity to learn exciting new dance techniques through a look at dance and music history of the turn of the century in America! In this "Journey Through Jazz" we will explore body percussion, tap dance, swing and jazz dance. The hard work of the students is showcased at the end of each quarter with a swingin' live performance share.

Grade 7 Dance

Students in 7th grade explore rhythm, cultivate coordination and focus on grounded movement through the exciting studies of both Hip Hop and African dance. The course will combine the best of dance technique, tradition, pop culture, and self-expression. In the beginning students will learn basic stationary and locomotor movements, challenging themselves to find the joy and authenticity in every moment. Once mastered, we will start to integrate more intricate patterns and sequencing. An emphasis on improvisation and finding one's own voice is structured into each class as well, furthering their experience as a performer of movement.

Grade 8 Dance

Students in 8th grade dance will learn a variety of dance techniques through the study and performance of works by noteworthy choreographers. We will discuss the history of the choreographer and their contribution to the dance world, while learning original dance pieces that will be presented at a share at the end of each semester. Choreographers may include Doris Humphrey (modern), Bob Fosse (jazz/theater dance), Alvin Ailey (modern dance), Rennie Harris (hip-hop), Agnes de Mille (ballet), Busby Berkeley (dance on film), and others.

Digital Video

How do we use the moving image to shape our world? How can sound add life to image and text? How can I make it look like I am flying? These are just a few of the driving questions that shape and inspire our journey through lights, camera and action. Packer Middle school video is hands on in its approach to making art. Students write, act, direct, and edit completely original work that is inspired by theme-based assignments designed to develop their sense of video storytelling.

Grade 5 Digital Video

In 5th grade, students become acquainted with iMovie and GarageBand applications by making short movies with still images and sound. They expand their experimentation in sound with an interdisciplinary exploration of songwriting by creating a musical poem and a three-word song in GarageBand.

Grade 6 Digital Video

6th grade builds on their skills as students use sound and image to create a movie that is inspired by what would be their *Best Day Ever!* Their imagination is given free reign as students are introduced to stop-motion animation. They work in groups and use themselves as animated objects in the stories they tell as they find creative ways to move their bodies through the school using animation and sound.

Grade 7 Digital Video

The 7th grade continues with animation as students create fluid hand drawn stop motion animations with sound. Student further develop their technical skills of video production by creating a silent movie. At the heart of this experience is recognizing the importance of sound as it relates to the moving image.

Grade 8 Digital Video

The 8th grade semester continues with growth and creativity that are at the core of the middle school video experience. The 24-second movie inspired by a shoe draws on the animation, video production, and sound design skills that students have learned in the media arts program up to this point. Students then

create a music video that pushes their imagination to the limit. The final project, which is at the pinnacle of the program, is to make a longer movie inspired by the techniques of Film Noir.

Theatre

Grade 5 Theatre

In the 5th grade, students will experience what it means to work as an ensemble. They will begin their session with activities that will garner a sense of comfort, creating a safe space for risk-taking. Once they are comfortable within the group, students are free to experience the joyful process of creating small, group theatrical pieces at each class meeting involving tableau, storytelling, pantomime and improvisation. Creating work and performing for their fellow classmates will fill students with confidence that will carry into all disciplines, and will prepare them for continuing their theatre studies in 6th grade. Finally, students will be cast in a short, scripted performance piece that will be shared at an end of quarter Arts Share with the dance class.

Grade 6 Theatre

6th grade theatre requires an increased awareness of stage presence, story structure and theatre production. Students will begin by continuing to hone their improvisational devising skills built in 5th grade theatre through various acting exercises. They will then be introduced to the process of “adapting” for the theater, and will create original works based on a novel from their 6th grade core English class. Students will write the scenes, learn the basics of staging and then direct another group of actors to perform them. Realizing original work in the classroom will foster a sense of students' pride in their projects, and at the same time will embolden them to take responsibility for their work. All students will perform their plays at an end-of-quarter showing.

Grade 7 Theatre

7th grade theatre focuses on the individual actor as an instrument of theatre. Students will be introduced to a variety of breath, body, voice and diction warm-up techniques that they will use to craft their own ‘personal warm-up’ by the close of the semester. They will dig deeply into the actor’s process of preparing a role, building a character and how to effectively use the actor's tools of body and voice to communicate ideas to an audience. A fully developed ‘Character Study’ will be conducted based upon characters created from a repertoire of exercises crafted from Uta Hagen’s celebrated technique. Through this work, students will generate an original monologue that will be presented at the end of the semester. The emphasis of the approach will not only be on how to break down the text for analysis, but also on

applying the vocal and stage movement techniques of the actor's process learned at the beginning of the semester.

Grade 8 Theatre

8th grade theatre students focus on building the skills necessary to analyze a text while also being able to live 'in the moment' on stage when working creatively off of an acting partner. They will learn how to approach a role and create a character, how to listen to their acting partner with not only their ears but their eyes, and begin to learn the techniques necessary to remain fully engaged and invested in a given set of imaginary circumstances. We will also touch on the various styles of text and acting techniques found throughout theatre history and ultimately select scenes to explore and interpret that represent a diverse selection of life experiences. This year through several neutral dialogue scene exercises students will also be asked to sit in the director's chair in order to begin learning how to tell a story visually while focusing on relationship, circumstance, emotional life and subtext inherent in a scene. In this rich workshop that allows students to utilize all that they have experienced in Middle School theater thus far, students are given the unique and challenging opportunity to carry a role from page to stage. Every student will be cast in a short scene, and will have the opportunity to perform at an end-of-quarter showing.

Visual Arts

Grade 5 Visual Arts

The 5th Grade Visual Arts program is based on beginning to identify a personal voice as an artist and being confident to take risks through the fine art process. This includes the exploration of materials, moving through a number of different drawing processes and learning a new vocabulary to be able to look at and talk about art. Through an array of different projects the students are invited to problem solve through observational drawing, experimenting with tonal value and scale, and translating their ideas from their imagination into visual images.

Grade 6 Visual Arts

In the 6th Grade Visual Arts program students explore a variety of materials through printmaking, drawing and painting. They are introduced to mixed media, in which students combine many different processes that culminate into one final project. They are introduced to pattern and design and challenged by observational drawing using an array of tools ranging from pencils to charcoal and brushes for ink washes. They are taken through a series of exercises that invite them to have to use their analytical thinking skills to understand composition and space as well as scale and the power of line.

Grade 7 Visual Arts

In the 7th Grade Visual Arts program the students explore the theme of identity through an array of approaches to self-portraiture: traditional drawings, autobiographical story telling, and three-dimensional visual narratives using symbols, object, color and texture. The students work through many different processes where they are asked to dream, experiment, build, and reflect about their experience of going through the process. Presentation is also part of the program where students share their work with other members of their grade for feedback about their work.

Grade 8 Visual Arts

In the 8th grade visual art program students explore media and ideas with increasing skill and depth. In drawing they become more expert in rendering the subtleties of three-dimensional form. In painting they develop a more sophisticated and nuanced color palette as they explore still life and landscape painting. Finally, they experiment with materials in more open-ended ways using their capacity to think with more precision in combination with the freshness of the child's perspective that is still alive in them.

Choral Music

Middle School Chorus is a performance-based group devoted to the study and performance of vocal music from a diverse spectrum of cultures, musical styles, and genres. The class includes training in healthy vocal production and singing technique, ear-training, sight-reading, music literacy, as well as expression and artistry in vocal performance. Each choral group rehearses twice a week and prepares for two yearly concerts. Each grade will meet separately but work on a combined repertoire 5th and 6th Grade Chorus and 7th and 8th Grade to be performed during dress rehearsals/ performances. Students also combine with other the MS choruses for larger MS ensemble experience.

Grade 5 Chorus

In 5th Grade Chorus, students explore the technical and artistic capabilities of their voice. Their experience in class builds on work done in the 4th Grade Chorus and LS Music Program. Through creative movement and dramatic interpretation, students learn to bring the text to life through song. Students begin work on ensemble singing in unison and 2 part singing as well as learning about blend and balance within the ensemble. Students begin to develop various musical skills essential to being a singer: proper intonation, note reading, score reading, rhythmic reading, dynamic interpretation, musicality, proper stage deportment and etiquette. Through a diverse repertoire, students will experience different cultures, different perspectives and to gain a passion for the world's musical diversity through song. The work done in class will guide and nurture each student as they develop their choral music skills and empower them to be independent and confident singers and musicians.

Grade 6 Chorus

In 6th Grade Chorus, students continue to explore and develop their voice through age appropriate repertoire. Students in 6th Grade Chorus learn to develop their solo voice and musical identity not only through group work but also solo and small group opportunities. Through a diverse repertoire, students will experience different cultures, different perspectives and to gain a passion for the world's musical diversity through song. Work on musical skills learned in 5th grade are reinforced and expanded upon and include: proper intonation, note reading, score reading, rhythmic reading, sight reading, dynamic interpretation, musicality, proper stage deportment and etiquette. Students in 6th grade chorus have the skill set to maneuver and understand 2-part scores, simple rhythmic and melodic phrases and notation, use appropriate terminology to describe music and the vocal mechanism.

Grade 7 Chorus

7th Grade Chorus is an opportunity for students to hone and shape their musical skills through vocal music. It builds upon the work done in the 5th and 6th grade choruses. Students become more independent in their work. Students approach text and artistry with a more critical eye to create a deeper musical interpretation. Students have more input in repertoire choices. Students continue to work on good vocal quality and proper vocal technique/posture as well as score reading skills. The students also work on 2 and 3 part harmony and being work on harmonic analysis of a work. Through a diverse repertoire, students experience different cultures, different perspectives and to gain a passion for the world's musical diversity through song as well as perform in various languages.

Grade 8 Chorus

8th Grade chorus is an opportunity for students to continue to refine and showcase their work through middle school. Students are voiced soprano, alto, tenor/baritone. Repertoire is more challenging and students work on two, three and four part music. Musicality skills are expanded through challenging note reading, score reading, rhythmic reading, and sight reading exercises. Dynamic interpretation, musicality, proper stage deportment and etiquette are continually reinforced. Honing independent musicianship skills, ensemble work, critical listening, and musicality are the fundamentals building blocks from which students can express their artistry through song.

Instrumental Music

The predominant feature of our program is applicable literacy. Beginning with an elementary understanding of the workings of a student's chosen instrument, historical significance and methodology then align with creatively rich and rewarding performance opportunities. In the middle school, the primary work is concentrated in methods. By necessity, each skill taught must be given ample pertinence in three ways: short studies, more expansive etudes, and in-class performance.

Brass Program

In the middle school brass and percussion classes, the primary work is concentrated in methods. By necessity, each skill is given ample pertinence in three ways: short studies, more expansive etudes, and in-class performance.

Grade 5 Brass

At these earliest levels in Brass 5, each discipline informs the proper handling, care and maintenance of the instrument, basic note reading, articulate rhythm, tone quality and intonation (pitch assimilation). Culmination of our work together allows our students to invest in the process and perform at year's end for our parents.

Grade 6 Brass

As we progress through the next few years we allow sensory thinking help to sculpt the imagination, making discovery possible. In Brass 6 our musicians work to invariably invent and play with patterns, using elementary phrasing to affect the beginnings of musical nuance. We begin working with scales, allowing specific notation dictate melodic content. At year's end, the goal of concertizing becomes possible. We are able to enjoin our class with those of the woodwinds. Seizing the opportunity to pool our talents, we collectively learn proper ensemble etiquette, the role of the conductor, section playing and how multiple parts must fit together within a performance ensemble.

Grade 7 Brass

A continuation of study in Brass/Percussion 7 includes the exploration of multiple key signatures and more complex meters as we continue to use patterns (albeit level appropriate) to build range, endurance and fingering/slide position familiarity. From the student's perspective, there will now occur the semblance of a cohesiveness of sound, especially found in Brass ensembles, since the process involved in producing a musical sound is the same from the highest to the lowest pitched instruments. As we have already introduced full concert band playing to our students, we can assume a continued progression of canonic literature for our students. (At this point, the possibility for inclusion in the MS Jazz program becomes possible as well.)

Grade 8 Brass

At the 8th grade level, our Brass students are poised for new discovery, the roles of the interpreter and the composer. With this study, a new lexicon comes into play as well, specifically referencing timbre, texture, and style. Our work includes comparative studies to other art forms, especially dance, as it applies to world music. We trace the development of our own music through the cultural exploration of the major eras in the arts. We continue to expand the parameters of technique, especially as so many of our students continue their work through performance in the upper school ensembles.

Winds Program

Grade 5 Woodwinds

5th Grade Woodwind students learn the fundamentals of playing, beginning with instrument and reed care (clarinets and oboes). Divided into Flute/Oboe and Clarinet classes, students learn to produce a sound by studying proper embouchure, breath support, playing position, articulation, and fingerings. Much of the material is learned by rote in a "call and response" fashion at first, and this methodology continues so each student develops her/his ear as much as the ability to read musical notation. Basic written rhythms, pitches, and expressive devices are mastered through the study of Classical, Folk, Pop, and Jazz genres. The creation of music is emphasized as early as possible through the study of simple improvisation and composition. Students learn how to rehearse and perform as a "Band" - culminating in a musical performance for parents in the spring, or a community outreach concert in a local nursing/residential home.

Grade 6 Woodwinds

In the 6th Grade students expand their musical literacy by incorporating new notes and fingerings, additional time signatures (including "Cut" Time), and more complicated rhythms and subdivisions. Through the study of basic scales, students expand their range into higher and lower areas of the instrument, while increasing finger speed and facility. Proper embouchure, intonation, and hand position continue to be emphasized, as does varied articulation. Repertoire expands into more intricate duets and rounds, and larger ensembles begin in two forms: students perform their first full "Band" piece in combination with the brass and percussion sections at the final spring concert; and the class performs a "world" music piece for their peers through the interdisciplinary "Silk Road Project."

Grade 7 Woodwinds

7th Grade students continue to increase their instrumental range and knowledge of key signatures through the study of scales and etudes. Their musical literacy expands as they cover 6/8 time, syncopation, chromatics, enharmonics and varied articulation. Students begin using the Garage Band program as a tool for practice and composition. An even greater emphasis is placed on ensemble playing, including dynamics, intonation, and blend. New ensemble opportunities include the 7/8 Jazz Band, in which interested students learn to play and improvise in the jazz "big-band" tradition in addition to the 7/8 Concert Band. Continuing the 6th Grade Band concept, this large ensemble rehearses regularly and performs bi-annually, covering classic band literature as well as Jazz, Latin, and even Pop idioms.

Grade 8 Woodwinds

As 8th Graders, students begin to shift to a mentoring role as they continue to master the intricacies of reading and performing music. This expanded role is particularly emphasized in the combined 7/8

Concert Band and 7/8 Jazz Band, where they lead by example. During woodwinds class, students expand their musical literacy through the continued study of scales - now striving for memorization and expansion into more complicated keys, as well as a basic understanding of the "Circle of 5ths". Their instrumental technique increases by mastering etudes, articulation exercises, and embouchure studies, all at increasingly faster tempos. Repertoire gets more challenging as they cover longer excerpts from Classical, March, Jazz (including improvisation), World, and Pop idioms. Emphasis is placed on preparation for Upper School ensembles as select students begin rehearsing and performing with those ensembles. This involvement raises the individual playing level while introducing them to standard Symphonic Band repertoire.

Strings Program

Grade 5 Strings

In Strings 5, students explore the many uses of music and how it affects their daily lives. Students also discover their own capabilities for making their own music. Through the learning and expansion of different techniques on their instrument, they create unconventional sounds on their instruments to create a soundtrack. By following specific criteria, students also begin to explore the different components of composition and improvisation, and they begin to write their own musical works.

Grade 6 Strings

In Strings 6, students learn about the use and function of music in different cultures around the world. In conjunction with the Silk Road studies in their English and History classes, students will expand their technique on their instruments through the rehearsal and performance of music from different world cultures. Through learning the different purposes of music within these civilizations, students also discover the function of scales and harmony in the Western Musical Cannon and elsewhere.

Grade 7 Strings

In Strings 7, students begin to rehearse and perform in small ensembles. Through the experience, students learn about the accountability of being in a small ensemble along with teamwork, trust, and respect. In addition to this work, students continue to work on listening skills by improving their intonation and tone production.

Grade 8 Strings

In Strings 8, students reflect on the use and function of music in their own lives. Through listening exercises and listening of music of different styles, students begin to determine the aesthetics of music, what about music they find pleasing and why these aspects of music are pleasing to them. Students also explore performing music as a soloist, as the year culminates with solo performances within the classes.

Health Education

Packer's Middle School Health Education program embraces and supports the social and emotional challenges facing middle school students. For one semester in grades five through eight, Health Education courses are offered twice a week. Content areas, such as nutrition, substance abuse prevention, human sexuality and family life are revisited each year with a cumulative emphasis on helping students make intelligent, informed decision about their own lives. Individuality and mutual respect are central to all Health Education courses at Packer.

Grade 5 Health

A one-semester course that meets twice a week throughout the spring, Health 5 introduces concepts related to social, emotional and physical health. The course is designed to help students draw connections between their emotions and their behaviors. The first few weeks of the quarter focused on social and emotional health. Through a series of group-bonding activities, class discussions, articles, journal entries, and videos, students explored emotional expression, self-esteem, peer pressure, cliques, and bullying (including cyber bullying).

The 4th quarter of Health 5 will include four lessons from the Prepare, Inc. personal safety curriculum. Starting the first week of April, Prepare, Inc. instructors visit our class to teach concepts, skills and application for safety in real world situations. The goal is to increase children's ability to stop behavior that is uncomfortable, unwanted or dangerous. Finally, we will wrap up the semester with a unit on puberty and human reproduction.

Grade 6 Health

Sixth Grade Health is a one semester course that meets twice a week. The first quarter of Sixth Grade Health focused primarily on Nutrition. Students evaluated the complex question of what it means to make "healthy" food choices. At the outset of this unit, students analyzed taste preferences through taste-test experiments. Next, students explored basic nutrients while learning how to read food labels. In order to apply these concepts to their own behavior, students kept 24-hour food logs. Then, based on the findings of their food logs, students set and tracked personal food goals over the course of three days. The unit culminated with the creation of a class cookbook, to which each student submitted a healthy snack recipe (final copies of the book are forthcoming). Looking ahead, students will study decision-making, and human reproduction before the end of this semester.

Grade 7 Health

Health 7 meets three times per cycle throughout the Spring semester. Designed to cultivate a deeper understanding of identity, students engage in a variety of group-bonding activities, class

discussions, journal entries, and videos. The first few weeks focus on alcohol and drug education. The primary goal is to help students build effective decision-making skills when it comes to critical choices around alcohol and drugs. Following a mini-unit on digital citizenship, the fourth quarter spans a unit on Identity Development. One by one, we explore social identifiers (religion, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical ability) and the assumptions, benefits and disadvantages associated with each. The unit wrap with a discussion of social justice and youth activism.

Grade 8 Health

The first quarter of Health Eight focuses on human sexuality, including male and female reproductive anatomy and physiology, sexual identity and gender. We also discuss sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception, consent and decisions about sexual behavior. Eighth graders wrap up the unit by analyzing recent news headlines around sexuality and consent. Next is a unit in which students explore models of youth activism and investigate issues related to sexuality. Students are not expected to become activists necessarily, however in small groups eighth grades must reflect upon their own passions and learn advocacy skills.

Physical Education

The Middle School Physical Education curriculum aims to provide students with a variety of physical activity experiences, which support the development of a range of physical skills. Skill development is fostered through team sport units such as Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball and Wiffleball. Along with traditional team sport skills, emphasis is placed on the importance of physical fitness, which supports intellectual and physical development. Through lead up games and activities, students have the opportunity to experience success as they develop consistent, effective skills.

Our Project Adventure curriculum provides a contrast to team sport activities and asks our students to improve their communication, work together and step outside their comfort zone, both physically and psychologically.

Our aim is to foster lifelong habits of activity, and provide a safe and enjoyable environment in which our students can push themselves, take risks and undertake group and personal challenges with confidence.

Grade 5 Physical Education

It is the goal of the Physical Education Department to expose students to a wide variety of sports and activities. The Middle School program focuses upon skill development and application through traditional team sports. The year begins with the volleyball and soccer units since it coordinates with the athletic

offerings for this age group. As the year progresses we move onto the study of Basketball, Project Adventure Cooperative Games, Lacrosse, Floor Hockey, and Diamond Games.

We start many lessons with dynamic stretching drills or a warm-up game from the Project Adventure Curriculum, where fitness components are developed in a non-traditional manner. We then introduce the game specific skills, and through a variety of drills we aim to reinforce skill development. Basic rules and strategies are also covered in each sport unit. As the unit progresses students have the opportunity to apply their skills in short sided games, variations of modified team play and tournaments. The Project Adventure curriculum introduces the students to cooperative games and problem solving activities. Having built a sense of trust in the community, the students are then challenged to support each other as they boulder and climb on the climbing wall. Cooperation, sportsmanship, and safety are always emphasized throughout the year.

Each student brings their own individual strengths to class. It is our aim to support skill acquisition and an understanding of the importance of personal fitness in a challenging and fun environment.

Grade 6 Physical Education

The 6th grade Physical Education Curriculum builds upon the team sports foundation offered in the 5th grade, while challenging students with more advanced skills and drills. Introducing strategies such as defensive positions and formations, offensive sets and game situations, students are asked to apply their skills appropriately in small sided and full team games.

Higher level hand-eye coordination activities, such as lacrosse and wiffle ball, are introduced and developed to give students a wide range of sporting experiences.

In Project Adventure activities students are asked to step outside their comfort zone, work to problem solve as a group and challenge themselves. The Wildside Kit, a low level system of beams, is introduced to further their balance, coordination, communication and cooperative skills. Using harnesses and the Australian belay system, students support their classmates as they climb the wall.

Grade 7 Physical Education

In 7th grade Physical Education, we begin a transition into non-traditional team sports, introduce one or two lifestyle activities and continue to build upon the foundations laid in place during 5th and 6th grade. Along with Soccer, Hockey and Basketball, Ultimate Frisbee, Speedminton and Tchoukball - a fast-moving handball game - are introduced for the first time. Our goal is to keep the activities fresh and exciting so that each student remains engaged in the class, while learning new skills and strategies.

In Project Adventure, we continue moving forward (and upward) on the rockwall, with the possibility of introducing single person belaying. This will depend upon the progression the class makes as a whole. The class also uses "Islands", a low level challenge course element, to further enhance their learning experience, continue to build upon cooperation and communication, with a stronger emphasis placed upon problem solving.

Grade 8 Physical Education

In the 8th grade the intention is to begin to look towards lifetime activities and to provide experiences which are both challenging and fun. Students can further develop their traditional team sport skills, and will be introduced to alternative individual and team activities, such as Ultimate Frisbee, Gator Ball, Speedminton, Tchoukball and Yoga. They are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their personal fitness, and will spend some introductory time in the fitness center familiarizing themselves with the weight and cardio machines.

Broadening our physical and psychological horizons, climbing wall activities and adventure games ask our students to stretch outside their comfort zones, work to problem solve as a group, and challenge themselves in new and exciting ways.

The 8th grade Physical Education Program aims to provide the opportunity for skill acquisition and development, increase awareness of personal fitness and encourage an enthusiasm which will support lifelong habits of physical activity.

Library

The Library curriculum focuses on the teaching of research skills, the evaluation of Internet sources, and the promotion of independent reading. In collaboration with teachers, librarians teach Middle School students the skills necessary to define a question and acquire background information, identify possible subject terms and sources, locate both print and electronic resources, and evaluate the usefulness of the sources for information. Students learn the principles of academic integrity through proper citation and note-taking. To support this learning, the Library maintains a robust online presence, which includes an online catalog and website with access to an extensive range of databases. Specific curricular components of the Middle School Library program include:

Sixth Grade Nonfiction Small Group Research Projects - Groups of four to five students meet weekly for four weeks with a librarian to research a nonfiction topic of their choice. They develop research questions, evaluate information sources, practice note taking and citation skills, and synthesize their research into a short presentation.

Summer Reading - The librarians prepare annual lists of fiction and nonfiction books designed to encourage students to become independent readers. The Summer Reading lists reflect student interest, diverse points of view, and outstanding quality in writing for young people.

Throughout all four years of Middle School, the librarians collaborate with teachers across departments to enrich information literacy instruction so that students will be competent researchers and ethical users of information.